(vii) Mass rapid Transport System (MRTS) including Metro has been introduced in select metro cities in the country.

(viii) Infrastructure related to construction of flyovers, bridges and roads, to reduce congestion, has been augmented.

Protection of tigers

2642. SHRI BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken steps for protection of tigers;

(b) if so, what are the new tiger conservation measures proposed to be adopted;

(c) the States where such steps are being taken;

(d) the impact on the tiger population because of these measures during the last three years;

(e) whether Government proposes to set up special task force for tigers; and

(f) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (f) The milestone initiatives taken by the Government of India for protection of tigers and other wild animals are given in the Statement.

Statement

Milestone initiatives (including the recent) taken by the Government of India for protection of tigers and other wild animals

Legal steps

1. Amendment of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 for providing enabling provisions for constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau.

2. Enhancement of punishment in cases of offence relating to a tiger reserve or its core area.

Administrative steps

3. Strengthening of antipoaching activities, including special strategy for monsoon patrolling, by providing funding support to Tiger Reserve States, as proposed by them, for deployment of antipoaching squads involving ex-army personnel/ home guards, apart from workforce comprising of local people, in addition to strengthening of communication/wireless facilities.

4. Constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority with effect from 4.09.2006, for strengthening tiger conservation by, *inter-alia*, ensuring normative standards in tiger reserve

management, preparation of reserve specific tiger conservation plan, laying down annual audit report before Parliament, constituting State level Steering Committees under the Chairmanship of Chief Ministers and establishment of Tiger Conservation Foundation.

5. Constitution of a multidisciplinary Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) with effect from 6.6.2007 to effectively control illegal trade in wildlife.

6. Declaration of eight new Tiger Reserves and in-principle approval accorded for creation of four new Reserves, namely Sahyadri in Maharashtra, Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh, Ratapani in M.P. and Sunabeda in Orissa.

7. The revised Project Tiger guidelines have been issued to States for strengthening tiger conservation, which apart from ongoing activities, interalia, include funding support to States for enhanced village relocation/rehabilitation package for people living in core or critical tiger habitats (from Rs. 1 lakh/family to Rs. 10 lakhs/family), rehabilitation/resettlement of communities involved in traditional hunting, mainstreaming livelihood and wildlife concerns in forests outside tiger reserves and fostering corridor conservation through restorative strategy to arrest habitat fragmentation.

8. A scientific methodology for estimating tiger (including co-predators, prey animals and assessment of habitat status) has been evolved and mainstreamed. The findings of this estimation/assessment are bench marks for future tiger conservation strategy.

9. An area of 29284.76 sq. km. has been notified by 15 Tiger States (out of 17) as core or critical tiger habitat under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006 (Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal). Two tiger States (Bihar and Uttar Pradesh) have taken a decision for notifying the core or critical tiger habitats (2765.04 sq.km.). The State of Madhya Pradesh has not identified/notified the core/critical tiger habitat in its newly constituted tiger reserve (Sanjay National Park and Sanjay Dubri Wildlife Sanctuary).

Financial steps

10. Financial and technical help is provided to the States under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, *viz.* Project Tiger and integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the States for providing effective protection to wild animals.

International Cooperation

11. India has a Memorandum of Understanding with Nepal on controlling trans-boundary illegal trade in wildlife and conservation, apart from a protocol on tiger conservation with China.

12. A Global Tiger Forum of Tiger Range Countries has been created for addressing international issues related to tiger conservation.

13. During the 14th meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES, which was held from 3rd to 15th June, 2007 at The Hague, India introduced a resolution along with China, Nepal and the Russian Federation, with directions to Parties with operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale, for restricting such captive populations to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers. The resolution was adopted as a decision with minor amendments. Further, India made an intervention appealing to China to phase out tiger farming, and eliminate stockpiles of Asian big cats body parts and derivatives. The importance of continuing the ban on trade of body parts of tigers was emphasized.

14. Based on India's strong intervention during the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee of the CITES at Geneva from 6th to 10th July, 2009, the CITES Secretariat has issued a notification to Parties to submit reports relating to compliance of Decisions 14.69 and 14.65 within 90 days with effect from 20.10.2009 (Progress made on restricting captive breeding operations of tigers etc.).

Reintroduction of Tigers

15. As a part of active management to rebuild Sariska and Panna Tiger Reserves where tigers have become locally extinct, reintroduction of tigers/tigresses have been done.

16. Special advisories issued for in-situ build up of prey base and tiger population through active management in tiger reserves having low population status of tiger and its prey.

Creation of Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF)

17. The policy initiatives announced by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech of 29.2.2008, *inter-alia*, contains action points relating to tiger protection. Based on the one time grant of Rs. 50.00 crore provided to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for raising, arming and deploying a Special Tiger Protection Force, the proposal for the said force has been approved by the competent authority for 13 tiger reserves. Rs. 93 lakhs each has been released to Corbett, Ranthambhore & Dudhwa Tiger Reserve for creation of STPF during 2008-09. Central Assistance will be provided to States for creation of STPF in remaining 10 Tiger Reserves in 2009-10. Since then, the guidelines of the STPF have been revised for deploying forest personnel in place of Police, with scope for involving local people like the Van Gujjars.

18. In collaboration with TRAFFIC-INDIA, action has been taken for an online wildlife crime data base, and Generic Guidelines for preparation of reserve specific Security Plan has been evolved.

Recent initiatives

19. Implementing a tripartite MOU with tiger States, linked to fund flows for effective implementation of tiger conservation initiatives.

20. Revised the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) guidelines to involve local people like Van Gujjars and others in field protection.

21. Rapid assessment of tiger reserves done (12 good, 9 satisfactory and 16 poor).

22. Special crack teams sent to tiger reserves affected by left wing extremism and low population status of tiger and its prey.

23. All India meeting of Field Directors convened on 25 and 26 July, 2009 under the Chairmanship of the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests for reviewing the status of field protection and related issues in tiger reserves.

24. Chief Ministers of tiger States addressed at the level of the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests on urgent issues, *viz.* implementation of the tripartite MOU, creation of the Tiger Conservation Foundation, stepping up protection etc.

25. Chief Ministers of States having tiger reserves affected by left wing extremism and low population status of tiger and its prey addressed for taking special initiatives.

26. Field visits to Bhadra, Corbett, Sariska and Ranthambhore made by the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests to review the initiatives and problems relating to tiger conservation.

27. Steps taken for modernizing the infrastructure and field protection.

28. Advisory issued for involvement of Non-Governmental Experts in the forthcoming all India tiger estimation.

29. Core Committee involving outside experts constituted for overseeing the forthcoming all India tiger estimation.

30. Report of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted for looking into the local extinction of tiger in the Panna Tiger Reserve sent to the State (Madhya Pradesh) for the needful action.

31. Issue of tiger farming and trafficking of tiger body parts discussed at the level of Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests with the Chinese Authorities.

32. Action taken for amending the Wildlife (Protection) Act to ensure effective conservation.

33. Initiatives taken for improving the field delivery through capacity building of field officials, apart from providing incentives.

34. Decision taken to host the World Tiger Summit in October-November, 2010.